A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN NETANYAHU'S SPEECHES

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the persuasive impact of metadiscourse (MD) markers in political speeches. It seeks to determine the extent to which MD practices contribute to the construction of persuasive discourse within this genre. To achieve this objective, a discourse analysis is applied to ten political speeches delivered by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel. Hyland's (2005a, 2005b) interpersonal models of MD are employed to investigate the frequency and persuasive impact of interactive and interactional devices utilized in speeches. The research has revealed that the persuasive intent conveyed through MD was largely dependent on the context. Consequently, Netanyahu often employed a combination of techniques to structure his discourse, influence audiences, capture their attention, and engage them in arguments. In addition, interactional devices were employed more frequently than interactive ones, indicating that engaging audiences in arguments and demonstrating one's stance and assessment of propositions were more likely to contribute to the construction of a persuasive political speech. The research results can be shared with foreign and second language learners, instructors, and speakers to enhance their understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic conventions employed in political discourse. Additionally, it can shed light on how persuasive discourse is constructed using MD markers.

Keywords

political discourse, metadiscourse markers, persuasion, Netanyahu's speeches, audience

1 Introduction

Metadiscourse (MD) is a prevalent linguistic tool that plays a crucial role in enabling speakers to effectively convey their stance on a proposition, construct a coherent discourse, negotiate shared understanding with their audience, and engage them in the discussion. Hyland (2005a) defines MD as a deliberate effort to guide readers or listeners through a text or speech by employing various linguistic elements. MD serves as a potent tool for speakers to establish and maintain social and interpersonal connections with the audience as an active participant in the discourse. Recently, several studies have focused on specific aspects of MD, including taxonomy of hedges, rhetoric-specific features of interactive MD, intercultural analysis of MD markers, textual and interpersonal MD markers, MD in policy documents, stance and engagement, as well as in various contexts of political, media, and academic discourse. (Cao & Hu, 2014;

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Ho, 2016; Hyland, 2005a, 2005b; Kashiha, 2022; Mansour & Alghazo, 2021). Our research aims to convey the notion that the selection of linguistic forms and meanings is directly influenced by the type and the nature of the interaction between participants. The purpose of this research is to examine the degree to which and the manner in which persuasion in Political Discourse (PD) is constructed through the selection of various MD mechanisms. Some examples of these devices are: *today I will discuss*, *I would like to talk about*, *I stated clearly that*, *I believe that*, *specifically, Israel will not allow* and *now remember this*.

1.1 Purposive persuasiveness in discourse

In the context of communication, MD plays a crucial role in conveying the intentions and objectives of speakers, as highlighted by Hyland (2005a). It enables them to project their interests, viewpoints, and assessments into a text and to process and refine concepts with consideration for potential audience/reader responses. Additionally, political speakers use language strategically to communicate their carefully crafted objectives to their audience, aiming to influence, convince, and sway them towards the desired outcomes and interpretations (Woods, 2006). As a persuasive tool, MD aids speakers in effectively engaging their audience, conveying relationships, apprising audiences of varying levels of certainty, and guiding their comprehension of a speech. Indeed, MD contributes to the logical, credible, and emotional appeals that have been characteristic of persuasive discourse since ancient Greece.

In his book, Hyland (2005a) posited that rhetoric is fundamentally viewed as the art and strategies of persuasion. Aristotle differentiates rhetoric from the more theoretical form of argumentation known as dialectic, describing it as the skill of identifying accessible methods for constructing persuasive evidence. It is essential to recognize that persuasion techniques must be adapted to accommodate variations in the three primary elements of communication: the speaker, the audience, and the substance of the argument. One additional element that may impact the process of persuasion is the situational context in which it transpires. This relationship can be reciprocal, as persuasion can contribute to the development of the context in various ways.

Persuasion in Political Speeches (PSPs) refers to the use of language, rhetoric, and communication strategies to influence and persuade audiences to adopt a particular point of view, support a specific policy, or take a desired course of action. Political figures often use persuasive techniques in their speeches to rally support, build coalitions, and advance their agendas. The concept of persuasion has gained widespread recognition for its traditional categorization introduced by Aristotle, encompassing ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos involves establishing

the speaker's persona and authority, pathos aims to evoke emotional responses in the audience, and logos presents logical reasoning and evidence to support arguments (Hyland, 2005a, p. 64). It is important to note that effective persuasive communication, where the context and reasoning resonate with both the audience and the speaker, necessitates a strategic integration of ethos, pathos, and logos.

Persuasion can be viewed in two primary ways: as a social phenomenon and as a cognitive phenomenon. The social perspective emphasizes that persuasion is a social process involving a series of communicative interactions between the persuader and the audience (van Dijk, 2006). The second viewpoint posits that persuasion can be considered a cognitive phenomenon as it seeks to influence and steer the audience's emotions, assumptions, and reactions (O'Keefe, 2002). Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that persuasion does not entirely alter the audience's customary practices and perspectives. Instead, its purpose is to reinforce and support the audience's existing habits and thought patterns. This study adopts a social phenomenon perspective on persuasion, inspecting the interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and the audience. The purpose of this research is to gain a thorough comprehension of the strategies employed by Netanyahu to achieve persuasive outcomes in PSPs through an examination of the patterns of MD marker usage. This study quantitatively analyzes the distributional patterns of MD use across ten selected speeches by Netanyahu. Additionally, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to examine how Netanyahu employs MD to effectively appeal to rationality, credibility, and affection.

1.2 Linguistic characteristics in PD and PSPs

Applied linguistics researchers have recently demonstrated a significant interest in analyzing the discourse of oral speeches to gain insights into the organization and rhetorical characteristics of spoken genres. Furthermore, the investigation of MD markers has garnered considerable attention from numerous researchers globally. These markers have been analyzed in a diverse range of languages and across various genres, including academic texts (Hyland, 2004, 2005a, 2005b), opinion columns (Dafouz-Milne, 2008), and research article abstracts (Mansour & Alghazo, 2021). A review of the literature reveals a dearth of articles on PD in comparison to other forms of discourse. However, less attention was paid to the use of MD markers as persuasive tools in political discourse. Noteworthy articles addressing persuasive perspectives in political discourse are discussed below.

With regard to the persuasive function of MD, Ho (2016) conducted an analysis of 12 documents pertaining to the Hong Kong government's education policy reforms to investigate the government's use of MD markers in an attempt

to persuade the public to accept these plans. In a comparative study of Chinese and American PSPs, Mai (2016) investigated the influence of MD markers on persuasion. In a study conducted by Rosingana (2018), the intricate mechanisms by which political discourse employs indirect fictional construals to achieve audience persuasion were meticulously dissected. In research conducted by Veloso and Feng (2018), the persuasive impact of linguistic forms and meanings employed in a PSP video disseminated during the 2010 Brazilian presidential campaign was meticulously examined.

In a distinct research study, Abusalim et al. (2022) delve into the usage of textual and interpersonal MD markers within the domain of political discourse, particularly examining their influence on persuasion. In 2017, Chen utilized Hyland's model to scrutinize the frequency and function of interactional and interactive MD markers employed in Hillary Clinton's speech during her initial political campaign in 2015. In another study, Dontcheva-Navratilova (2008) inspected the frequency and function of self-referential MD in institutional and PSPs given by three diplomats serving as UNESCO's directors-general. In a comparative analysis of MD markers employed in academic and PD, Kashiha (2021) examined the usage of MD markers that serve to engage the audience in academic lectures and PSPs, adhering to Ädel's (2010) taxonomy of MD. Another study conducted by Kashiha (2022) sought to examine the persuasive significance of MD markers within PSPs. In her 2008 paper, Dafouz-Milne seeks to explore the function of MD markers in persuasion.

With respect to the aforementioned, it has come to our attention that there is a notable absence of research focusing on MD markers and their persuasive functions within the realm of political discourse, with only a limited number of studies addressing this specific area. Consequently, this study endeavors to rectify this gap and contribute novel insights to the study of MD markers in political discourse. More specifically, the study aims to identify and ascertain the predominant MD markers employed in Netanyahu's PSPs, along with their instrumental role in constructing and achieving persuasion.

2 Methodology

2.1 Corpus

This research is based on a collection of ten PSPs delivered by Netanyahu. The speeches were delivered at various locations and on different occasions, including the UN (in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2023), AIPAC in 2012, Congress on Iran in 2015, the Conflict with Gaza in 2021, his final speech in 2021, a news conference in 2023, and a televised address in 2023. The duration of the speeches

ranged from 10 to 60 minutes. The full transcripts, along with the corresponding video files, were sourced from reputable online platforms such as *YouTube*, *Vox*, *Rev*, and *Times of Israel*. The corpus encompasses a total of 27,500 words, comprising four speeches delivered at the UN (13,126 words), one presented in the US Congress (3,927 words), another at AIPAC (1,792 words), and four additional addresses totaling 8,720 words (see Table 1).

Titles of speeches	Words & Years	Length of speeches	Range from 692 to 4,367 words
1) A News Conference:	**692 words in 2023**	**Average length**	2,750
2) Televised Address	961 words in 2023	**Total No. of markers**	9,155
3) AIPAC	1,792 words in 2012	**Total No. of words in speeches**	27,500 words
4) The UN	2,455 words in 2017	**Total No. of Interactive MD markers**	3,211 markers
5) Conflict with Gaza	2,700 words in 2021	**Total No. of Interactional MD Markers**	5,944 markers
6) The UN	2,754 words in 2023		
7) The UN	3,777 words in 2015		
8) to the US Congress	3,927 words in 2015		
9) The UN	4,140 words in 2016		
10) His Final Speech	4,367 words in 2021		

Table 1: Description of the corpus and MD markers

The speeches were chosen because the purpose of this study was to examine how persuasive discourse was achieved in PSPs through the use of MD practices. The existence and role of audiences as receivers of such persuasion were essential. Therefore, the speeches were selected to represent the audience's role as an active discourse participant. The rationale for the selection of Netanyahu's speeches was strategically made due to his prominence as a highly controversial global leader, garnering significant attention in the context of the recent Israel-Hamas conflict. Therefore, analyzing his speeches can be crucial in understanding his reliance on lexico-grammatical resources and linguistic features. Additionally, it can shed light on his utilization of the interpersonal model of MD, seasoned with purposive persuasiveness, to sway, alter, and control the attitudes and reactions of interlocutors. This is accomplished to some degree through not only word selection but also MD markers, which are linguistic tools used to establish a connection with the audience and structure the speech for smooth processing by the recipients (Hyland, 2019).

2.2 Instrument and procedure

This study applied both quantitative and qualitative analyses. An initial functional analysis of a segment of the dataset revealed the types of MD markers employed in all speeches. Our analysis encompassed not only lexical items that serve as MD markers, such as code glosses and transitions, but also syntactic structures, including passive voice, *if*-clauses, negation, and so forth, all of which were identified as potential strategies in political discourse for hedging, boosting, engaging, persuading or building rapport with the audience or even modulating a message. The quantitative phase involved analyzing the frequency distributions of the identified MD markers in the speeches. Conversely, the qualitative component focused on analyzing the discourse function of the identified markers and how these functions were utilized to construct persuasive discourse in the speeches. A systematic approach was undertaken to analyze the corpus. Primarily, the transcriptions and their corresponding video files were downloaded from the above websites. Subsequently, a thorough verification process was conducted to match each transcript with its respective video file. Finally, each transcript was meticulously analyzed manually to identify the types of MD markers employed, drawing upon Hyland's (2005a, 2005b) interpersonal models of MD as the theoretical framework.

Prior to commencing the analysis of the designated corpus, we undertook measures to ensure the coder reliability of the analysis. This involved computing both intra-rater (with a three-month interval) and inter-rater reliability using Cronbach's alpha. To calculate the inter-rater reliability, a distinct portion of the intended corpus was independently analyzed. Upon obtaining a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 for the results, any discrepancies stemming from differences in interpretation were subject to negotiation, leading to a consensus on the methodology for analysis. Given the context-dependent nature of MD and its multifunctional characteristics, we conducted a manual analysis with contextual annotations on the corpus to identify the primary function of ambiguous cases. To mitigate the risk of idiosyncratic effects from researchers and ensure analysis accuracy, we employed a consistent data codification method as well. Specifically, we determined the coding's reliability through interrater agreement. In order to accomplish this, two researchers who were experts in discourse analysis were consulted to assist the researchers in identifying the primary category of any ambiguous and conflicting cases. After a thorough analysis of the context in which they were used, an agreement was reached.

Ultimately, the finalized MD markers were subjected to a further discourse analysis to ascertain their persuasive intent within the context of the speeches. This analysis aimed to identify the specific MD functions employed to influence and convince the audience. To ensure consistent length and even distribution

of markers across the ten speech contexts, we normalized the frequency counts using Biber et al.'s (1998) method. This involves dividing the raw frequency count by the number of words in the text and multiplying the result by 1,000 to obtain the normalized frequency count.

2.3 Analytical framework

The interpersonal models of MD were initially introduced by Hyland (1998, 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) and were subsequently expanded by Hyland (2005a, 2005b). Hyland's (2005a) model has been widely utilized in the literature to examine the employment of interactive and interactional markers across diverse registers (see section 1.2). In this research, an amalgam of the two models presented by Hyland (2005a, 2005b) was utilized and adopted to serve the purpose (see Table 2). The proposed version is a little more comprehensive, encompassing functions related to political discourse, such as negation, progressive form, agentless passive, if clauses, personal asides, directives, and questions. Furthermore, to better align with the study's objective, the sub-function of 'reader pronouns' was modified to 'audience pronouns', considering the focus on PSPs. The MD taxonomy can be broadly categorized into two primary types: interactive and interactional. Interactive MD (Table 2), denoting 'information flow', aids in guiding the audience through the discourse and is further divided into five sub-functions (transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses) (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b).

The second primary category, interactional often called 'formulaic devices', seeks to engage the audience in a discourse and convey the speaker's stance and assessment of the subject matter. It comprises five sub-functions, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers encompassing a more extensive category proposed in the study, including directives, shared knowledge, audience pronouns, rhetorical tropes and rhetorical questions, personal asides and so forth (see Table 2).

In the context of communication, hedging serves as a rhetorical strategy, as defined by Fraser (2010). By employing hedging devices, a speaker can avoid making a definitive commitment to a proposition. This approach demonstrates a degree of uncertainty and invites further discussion and exploration of the topic at hand. To effectively analyze the corpus and based on Fraser's category, we propose some ubiquitous hedging structures exploited extensively in political discourse as 'illocutionary force hedges' in our study (see Table 1). These structures include Agentless Passive, Negation, Progressive Form, and *If*-clauses (Fraser, 2010). Engagement markers are the various methods orators employ to engage the audience in the discussion and directly address them, either to

capture their attention or involve them as active participants in the discourse. These functions are primarily fulfilled through the use of the key engagement features like questions, directives (*see*, *note*, etc.), references to shared knowledge (*as we know*, etc.), audience pronouns (*you*-groups) and personal asides (*meanwhile*, etc.).

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive Resources aid to guide the audience through texts/talks		
Transitions	Express semantic relation through the text/talk	*in addition /but/thus/and*
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or text stages	*finally/to conclude/ my purpose here is to*
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text/talk	*noted above/see fig./in section 2/as follows*
Evidentials	Refer to source of information from other texts/talks	*according to X/ Y (2022), Z states that, to quote X, etc.*
Code glosses	Help readers grasp functions of ideational material	*namely, e.g., such as, in other words*
Interactional Resources aid the audience in the argument		
Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitment to proposition including agentless passive, negation, progressive form, *if*-clauses, etc.	*might, perhaps, possible, probable, appear, isn't it, I think, unless, as long as*
Boosters	Emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition	*in fact, definitely, it is clear that*
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	*unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly, hopefully*
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to authors(s)	*I, we, my, our*
Engagement markers	Explicitly refer to or build relationships with audiences including directives, questions, shared knowledge, audience pronouns, rhetorical questions, personal asides, rhetorical tropes	*consider, note that, should remember that, as we know, you can see that, you, your, do you know that, meanwhile*

Table 2: A proposed model of MD in political discourse adopted from Hyland (2005a, p. 49)

3 Results and discussion

It is imperative to reiterate that the current study adheres to the social phenomenon perspective of persuasion. The speaker's role is to support and enhance the audience's existing comprehension of the subject matter rather than attempting to induce a change in their beliefs. Consequently, the MD resources identified in this study primarily served as persuasion facilitators or catalysts rather than idea manipulators. In this regard, a total of 9,155 lexical

items (about 34%) were identified as serving persuasive MD functions. In addition, interactional types were more frequently observed in the speeches than interactive ones (5,944 vs. 3,211 tokens, respectively). It is possible that engaging audiences and expressing one's stance and assessment of propositions may be more effective in crafting a persuasive PSP. Nevertheless, Netanyahu also employed a range of interactive markers as an alternative persuasive strategy to structure his discourse, construct a coherent speech, and establish his preferred interpretations. Generally, the quantitative results of this study align with those of Chen (2017) and Kashiha (2022), who observed a higher frequency of interactional resources compared to interactive resources.

In this research, interactional MD exhibited two primary characteristics: speaker-oriented and listener-oriented features. The speaker-oriented dimension encompassed elements that alluded to the methods employed by the speaker to persuade audiences by expressing his perspectives and conveying his attitudes, judgments, and commitments to the audience. In the listener-oriented feature, the speaker effectively engaged the audience by establishing a direct connection, guiding them through the presentation, clarifying arguments, acknowledging potential doubts, and actively involving them in the discourse. Tables 3 and 4 provide a comprehensive overview of the distribution of interactive and international types across the ten venues where the PSPs were delivered.

				Interactive		**Interactional**	
	Raw	Total No. of MD markers	Total percentage in the speech	MD markers	Percentage in the speech	MD markers	Percentage
A News conference	692 words	304	43.92	101	14.59	203	29.33
Televised Address	961 words	280	29.13	98	10.19	182	18.93
AIPAC	1,972	502	28.01	162	9.04	340	18.97
The UN (2017)	2,455	989	40.28	400	16.29	589	23.99
Conflict with Gaza	2,700	1,025	37.96	353	13.07	672	24.88
The UN (2023)	2,754	967	35.22	305	11.11	622	24.11
The UN (2015)	3,777	1,192	31.55	444	11.77	748	19.83
to the US Congress	3,927	859	21.90	300	7.63	559	14.23
The UN (2016)	4,140	1436	34.68	489	11.81	947	22.87
His Final Speech	4,367	1,601	36.66	562	12.86	1,039	23.79

Table 3: Percentage and frequency distribution of MD markers in the corpus

3.1 Interactive MD in PSPs

Our research indicates that the primary objective of interactive types was to guide the audience through the speeches. The quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed both similarities and differences in the deployment of interactive types within the corpus. As shown in Table 3, the most prevalent interactive type in the entire corpus was transitions, which is consistent with Chen's (2017) research and Kashiha's (2022) study. In the present study, transitions manifested in the forms of additive, adversative, and causative; they were primarily employed to foster cohesion in discourse and alleviate the audience's cognitive burden in comprehending the interconnectedness of propositions. In the context of transitions, the most commonly used word was *and*, followed by *because*, *but*, *or*, *also*, *so*, *equally*, *while*, *whereas*, as in:

(1) *But today we do have a voice. We do have a state. And we do have protective power. And therefore, I told the […].* [His Final Speech, 2021]

In terms of interactive MD, evidentials (792 tokens, about 3%, Norm: 28.8) and frame markers (772 tokens, about 3%, Norm: 28.07) were the most frequently employed persuasive strategies (see Table 4). While infrequent in the entire corpus, the speaker sought to engender audience trust in their assertion by referencing the statements of other notable individuals or organizations on the subject. In this case, evidentials, as follows, can serve as constitutive elements of PSPs. Additionally, referencing influential decision-making bodies, such as the U.S. Congress and the UN, can enhance the speaker's ability to construct persuasive discourse.

(2) *Moses said that the people's fate […] the blessing and the curse.* [UN, 2023]

(3) *In the G20 conference, President Biden, Prime Minister Modi and European and Arab leaders announced plans for[…].* [UN, 2023]

In the above examples, Netanyahu employed evidentials as supplementary information to bolster his argument. This strategic approach was informed by his understanding that the audiences in the U.S. Congress, the UN, and other relevant entities are well-versed in these matters and may otherwise discount his statements. Frame markers assisted Netanyahu in structuring his discourse as well, referencing sequences or stages, indicating topic shifts, and declaring the objectives of his speech. In the provided instances, Netanyahu endeavored to persuade the audience and instill confidence in the measures implemented to manage Iran's nuclear program by structuring his discourse in a sequential manner. In (5), he attempted to achieve a similar objective by expressing gratitude to his supporters for their assistance. In (4), he effectively conveyed his argument by emphasizing the critical significance of his speech to the audience.

(4) *The first major concession would leave Iran […]. But the second major concession […].* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

(5) *From here, I would like to appeal to the supporters […]. I would like to say to you: I am proud of you.* [Televised Address, 2023)

It was discovered that the speaker used code glosses to provide supplementary information by restating, clarifying, or expanding on what was said. This was done to ensure that the audience could comprehend the speaker's intended message and the subjects and issues being discussed in ten speech settings. The realizations, as follows, were employed as a persuasive approach to reword or delineate particular sections of discourse and help audiences have a better understanding of the topic.

(6) *It means making a moral distinction between […]. It means holding Hamas responsible for […]. It means making clear that the use of human shields is […].* [A News Conference, 2023]

In one of his speeches, he employed three code glosses to further elaborate on his preceding assertion. This persuasive and attention-grabbing strategy was further enhanced by providing an example using phrases like *such as*, *including* or *in other words* and so forth, throughout the speeches.

As indicated in Table 3, Netanyahu employed endophoric markers (168 instances, 1 %, Norm: 6.1) across ten speeches with a relatively consistent frequency (see Table 4). It seems that placing emphasis and assigning particular significance or value to an argument by referencing previous or subsequent points was likely to create a more persuasive speech, as in:

(7) *That's why I said two years ago that the greater danger is not that Iran […].* [UN, 2023]

(8) *For three months I have repeatedly called for dialogue and also said that I would leave […].* [Televised Address, 2023]

In the aforementioned examples and others found within the speeches, when attempting to persuade international politicians within the UN to accept his argument or a significant decision made by the US or UN concerning military intervention, Netanyahu utilized the phrases *I've said before* to reference previously stated information and *I ended that* or *I also said that* to emphasize specific points. Upon further examination of the endophoric markers, it was discovered that they were primarily associated with the self-referential pronoun *I* and were utilized in conjunction with the interactive MD.

	A News Conference	Televised Address	AIPAC	The UN 2017	Conflict with Gaza	The UN 2023	The UN 2015	To the US Congress	The UN 2016	His Final Speech
Total Words	692	961	1,792	2,455	2,700	2,754	3,777	3,927	4,140	4,367
Raw MD	304	280	502	989	1,025	967	1,192	859	1,436	1,601
Norm	-	-	280	402	379	351	315	218	346	366
Engagement	72	40	100	153	201	209	194	105	285	235
Attitude Markers	74	58	47	192	116	230	140	77	205	304
Self-Mention	28	37	48	143	147	123	210	138	266	264
Trans-itions	37	35	71	140	144	140	172	90	176	212
Hedges	25	45	124	74	164	78	136	188	114	188
Evident-ials	39	14	40	132	45	57	104	95	150	116
Frame Markers	13	39	37	84	95	68	109	77	112	138
Boosters	4	7	21	27	44	22	68	49	77	48
Code Glosses	8	5	7	22	45	21	38	29	25	65
Endo-phoric	4	5	7	22	24	19	21	9	26	31

Table 4: Frequency distribution of MD markers in the Corpus.

3.2 Interactional MD in political speeches

The findings revealed that the use of various interactional types of MD further defined and strengthened persuasion. To build persuasion, Netanyahu sought to engage audiences in his arguments and assess his level of certainty and commitment towards statements. Tables 3 and 4 provide a detailed breakdown of the distribution of both MD types in the speeches. In terms of interactional MD, engagement markers can be predominantly employed to actively involve the audience in the presentations and foster a collaborative and harmonious rapport between presenters and the audience. In this research, several rhetorical tropes, including parallelism, power of three (three-part listing), antithesis, and rhetorical questions, are presented and considered within the engagement marker category. These devices not only enhance the persuasiveness of discussions but also actively involve audiences in the arguments, prompting them to contemplate the presented discourse.

Rhetorical analysis involves examining persuasive, emphatic, effective, and contrasting strategies, particularly in the context of political discourse. Political rhetoric, in particular, aims to guide its audience toward specific thoughts, opinions, and ultimately, actions. The primary objective of politicians is not to present factual information, but rather to employ persuasive strategies (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014; Woods, 2006). According to Cuddon (2012), parallelism refers to the repeated use of similar syntactic and lexical structures within or across sentences. In the realm of oratory, the rhetorical device of three-part listing falls under the broader category of parallelism. By employing parallel constructions and the rule of three or more in sequences, they not only enhance the clarity, consistency, impact, effectiveness, and aesthetic appeal of the sentences, but also ensure that they are easily retained and remembered by the audience. They also generate a familiar clap-trap rhythm that the audience perceives as both compelling and suitably political (Kazemian, 2015; Woods, 2006). Antithesis, as defined by Cuddon (2012), is a literary device that employs contrasting ideas to generate a distinct and transparent association between two concepts. This technique involves juxtaposing or connecting opposing or noticeably different meanings, frequently utilizing parallel structures to enhance the contrast.

(9) *For the first time in my lifetime, […] Israel is not <u>their enemy</u>. They recognize that Israel is <u>their ally</u>. <u>Our common</u> enemies are Iran and ISIS. <u>Our common</u> goals are <u>security, prosperity and peace</u>.* [UN, 2016]

In the above excerpt, the use of antithesis between *their enemy* and *their ally* and the parallel structure of *our common* accompanied by a three-part listing

of nouns serve as rhetorical devices to enhance persuasion, aesthetic appeal highlighting disparities. These techniques effectively engage the audience and draw them into the argument presented.

The most commonly used persuasive elements in the speeches (Tables 3 and 4) were engagement markers (1,594 tokens, 5.8%, Norm: 58), attitude markers (1,443, 5%, Norm: 52), and self-mention (1,404, about 5%, Norm: 51). In contrast to Kashiha's study (2022), hedges (1,136, 4%, Norm: 41.3) and boosters (367, 1.3%, Norm: 13) were the least employed markers in the speeches (see Table 4). The speaker's frequent use of engagements and self-mentions indicates a primary focus on engaging the audience. This approach aims to direct the audience's attention and actively involve them as participants in the discourse; this explicit reference to the speaker and his stance establish him as an active participant in the discourse, enhancing the persuasiveness and impact of the speech (Chen, 2017; Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008). Additionally, persuasion was achieved through the frequent use of engagement markers, as well as the pronouns *I* and *you.* The use of *I* lends credibility to the statement, as it implies firsthand knowledge and experience. This, in turn, enhances the overall persuasiveness of the utterance, as in:

(10) *Well, I disagree. I don't believe that Iran's radical regime will change for the better after this deal. […]* [To congress on Iran, 2015]

(11) *We deeply appreciate the great alliance between our two countries. But when it comes to Israel's survival, we must always remain the masters of our fate.* [APIAC, 2012]

In the above examples, the sentence in (10) commences with a frame marker (*well*) to denote topic shifts; self-mention *I* is employed in conjunction with an attitude marker *disagree* and a hedge (*believe*). *Radical regime* may be viewed as an attitude marker conveying the speaker's affective, rather than epistemic, stance towards the proposition. The phrase *this deal* is deemed an endophoric marker alluding to the nuclear agreement with Iran; the phrase has been utilized 82 times and the term *Iran* is employed 382 times in the speeches, underscoring the speaker's preoccupation with the agreement. In (11), the exclusive *we* as a self-mention is employed with the attitude marker *deeply appreciate*. Additionally, *we* is utilized with the double boosters *must always*. The first *our* is inclusive, while the second one refers exclusively to the speaker and his people.

It is widely acknowledged (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b) that speeches convey information about the speaker, but the convention of first-person pronouns is arguably the most effective method of self-mention. The inclusion or exclusion

of explicit self-mention statements is typically a deliberate decision made by speakers to assume a specific stance and establish a contextually relevant authorial identity. One significant observation from this study was the speaker's frequent use of first-person plural pronouns, encompassing both exclusive and inclusive *we*-groups (*we*, *our*, *us*) throughout the speeches. This suggests that the speaker predominantly assumes the role of the discourse controller, while simultaneously acknowledging the active participation of the audience in the discourse. The exclusive *we*-group as self-mention and the inclusive ones as engagement markers accounted for the most prevalent types in the speeches, making this audience involvement strategy a unique genre-based feature of PD that may distinguish it from other spoken genres. Furthermore, Netanyahu has extensively employed the terms *Israel*, *Jewish people*, and exclusive *we*-groups referring to himself and his government, as in:

(12) *Well, Israel has the same policy. We are determined to prevent Iran […]. We leave all options on the table.* [AIPAC, 2012]

(13) *It is time for all of us to decide if we're willing to fight for a future […].* [A News Conference, 2023]

It is clear from the above examples that the use of first-person plural pronouns varied in function depending on the context of the speeches. For instance, in the speech delivered at AIPAC (12), it appears that the terms *Israel* and *we* refer to the president and the government, whereas in (13), the pronouns (*we*, *our*, and *us*) encompass the president and the audience. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of MD is defined and impacted by the context in which it is utilized (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b).

(14) *While Israel seeks peace with all our neighbors, we also know that peace has no greater enemy than the forces of militant Islam.* [UN, 2016]

As previously mentioned, the majority of sentences in the speeches are an amalgam of various markers. This suggests that the speeches were not spontaneous, but rather carefully planned and potentially written by professional speechwriters with the intent to influence and gain support from the audience. In the opening of (14), the speaker conveyed his objection by combining an opposing transition (*while*) with a self-mention (*Israel*) and a frame marker (*seeks*) followed by shared knowledge (*we also know that*) and an attitude marker (*greater enemy*) to announce his government's objective regarding peace. In (15), the speaker employs a causative transition marker (*because*) coupled with a

booster (*in fact*) to establish connections between previously discussed segments of his discourse. Subsequently, he presents a three-part listing to convey the impending dire consequences of the action.

(15) *Because what that does is, in fact, encourage the terrorists. It gives succor, it gives support. It gives encouragement to the terrorists, […].* [Conflict with Gaza, 2021]

Rhetorical questions (RQs) are another type of engagement marker frequently used in PD. According to Kazemian et al. (2021), rhetorical questions can be used to convey the speaker's intentions to the audience and encourage them to ponder over and engage with the argument. The speaker has posed 117 (0.4%, Norm: 4, see Table 4) RQs in the corpus as follows:

(16) *So is there no limit to the UN's absurdities when it comes to Israel?* [UN, 2017]

(17) *And why was this? Why were these good intentions? Why did they always meet failure?* [UN, 2023]

By utilizing these strategically planned RQs throughout the speeches, the audiences may feel compelled to contemplate the questions and can be engaged in the discourse as well. These types of questions are considered a persuasive approach because they were used to present the primary plan for engaging in conversation and establish a direct, interactive dialogue with audiences to capture their attention.

Personal asides were discovered to be a highly context-driven tactic, which entailed the speaker's attempt to disrupt the primary argument's flow with additional remarks, making the argument more appealing to audiences and eliciting their response or reaction. All the identified instances were found to be introduced by a connector such as *of course* and *by the way*, as in:

(18) *But from past experience, and I have such experience – you know that I've made two comebacks from the opposition, two comebacks – from past experience.* [His Final Speech, 2021]

As previously discussed, the use of attitude markers, the second utilized marker in the corpus (1,443, 5% and Norm: 52), further facilitated audience persuasion (see Table 4). These markers served an additional function of stance, specifically attitudinal stance, which pertains to the speaker's relationship and engagement with the audience regarding the topic. This was a deliberate persuasive tactic employed by the speaker to clearly express his viewpoint or evaluation of a specific topic using emotive language, as in:

(19) *History has given us an extraordinary opportunity, unprecedented in the annals of nations.* [Televised Address, 2023]

(20) *Sure, they say, Iran is cruel, but it's not crazy. It's detestable but it's deterrable.* [AIPAC, 2012]

In the following example, Netanyahu employed the polite and respectful expression *I am deeply humbled* at the commencement of his address to the US Congress (2015). By utilizing this expression, he aimed to convey a sense of modesty and appreciation, thereby leaving a favorable impression on his audience.

(21) *My friends, I'm deeply humbled by the opportunity to speak for a third time before […].* [To the US Congress, 2015]

Occasionally, the speaker has used attitude expressions such as *committed to*, *convinced that*, *confident that*, and *determined to* in conjunction with a self-mention and a booster to emphasize the significance of certain topics and directly attribute the emotional assessment to himself. This explicit attribution of the speaker's stance to audiences and topics is viewed as a self-disclosure strategy that can enhance the persuasiveness and coherence of the speech (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008). In the following examples, the significance of the subject matter was conveyed via a booster (*absolutely*), which co-occurred with the self-mention (*I* and *we*) and was followed by an expression of attitudinal meaning (*confident*, *determined*).

(22) *I am absolutely confident that the revolution in Israel's ties […].* [UN, 2017]

(23) *We are determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.* [AIPAC, 2012].

Another persuasive strategy related to audience engagement was the use of directives. Directives typically guide audiences to take a specific action or perceive things in a manner determined by the speaker. Netanyahu used imperative structures as a directive method to engage audiences in the argument and heighten their awareness of the subject matter under discussion. For example, in (24), he employed the phrase *make sure* three times, emphasizing its importance with the booster *actually*. In (25), the speaker employed the directive *listen closely* in conjunction with self-reference (*I*) to capture the audience's attention and emphasize the significance of the argument they were about to present.

(24) *Make sure that the inspectors actually inspect. Make sure that the snapback sanctions actually snap back. And make sure that Iran's violations […].* [UN, 2015]

(25) *Listen closely to what I'm about to say. I'll be pleased to […].* [His Final Speech, 2021]

Those speech acts that conveyed attitudinal meanings, such as expressing gratitude or warm welcome, were also observed to serve as directives or interactive engagements with the audience. These were mainly apparent in the speeches where the speaker directly engaged with the audience at the commencement or conclusion of the speeches through the use of audience involvement pronouns and exclusive *we*-groups, such as:

(26) *Thank you for your support and it warms our heart to see that […] had actually the Israeli flag […]. for us. We appreciate that and we appreciate […]* [On conflict with Gaza, 2021]

The strategic use of audience pronouns, particularly the second person pronoun *you*, appears to be an effective persuasive technique employed by Netanyahu to engage audiences and exert control over the discourse. He directly addressed the audience in his speeches using phrases such as *my friends*, *ladies and gentlemen*, when he wanted to introduce a new argument, change the subject, or draw their attention, as in:

(27) *So you see, my friends, this deal has two major concessions* [to congress on Iran, 2015]

(28) *Ladies and gentlemen, this is a turning point, a turning for leaders and nations.* [A News Conference, 2023]

In certain instances, the speaker employed a combination of a directive and an audience pronoun as a persuasive tactic (Examples 1, 2, 8, 16, 20, 27, 28 and 29) to strengthen speaker-audience rapport and establish direct engagement by guiding the audience toward the intended interpretation of the discourse, as in:

(29) *I only ask of you one thing: Continue to act responsibly and do not be dragged into any provocation.* [Televised Address, *2023*]

Shared knowledge markers were used sparingly in the speeches, with only 16 instances found across the entire corpus. These markers, such as *we know*, *It's well known to all of us*", and *we recognize that*, were often accompanied by first person plural pronouns, indicating the speaker's intention to position the

audience within implicit boundaries of consensus. This persuasive strategy is effective when the speaker invokes the audience's shared knowledge and values, which are widely accepted within the sociocultural or sociopolitical community, without explicitly citing a source document, as in:

(31) *You know the peace process began over two decades ago.* [UN, 2015]

(32) *As you know, I took a fairly active role in them.* [UN, 2017]

It was observed that persuasion was also indicated through evaluative functions of hedges and boosters. The evaluation in this context pertains to the speaker's assessment of the propositions and concepts, serving as a means to establish rapport with the audience. As previously discussed, Netanyahu showed a notable preference for hedges (1,136, 4%, Norm: 41) over boosters (367, 1%, Norm: 13). As presented in Tables 3 and 4, hedges were the fourth most prevalent category of interpersonal MD markers. Within hedges, the proposed functions (agentless passive, *if*-clauses, negation, and progressive form) along with modal verbs and epistemic verbs were the most frequent. Hedges are employed to convey uncertainty, hesitation, probability, and a lack of commitment, as in:

(33) *According to the deal, not a single nuclear facility would be demolished. Thousands of centrifuges used to enrich uranium would be left spinning. Thousands more would be temporarily disconnected but not destroyed*. [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

In the speeches, 177 passive sentences (1%, Norm: 6) are employed, intentionally omitting and suppressing the agents. It is evident that the speaker seeks to avoid accountability for his assertions and aims to maintain an objective stance. Consequently, content-oriented hedges, particularly passive constructions, effectively serve this purpose.

(34) *If the world powers are not prepared to insist that Iran change its behavior before a deal is signed, at the very least […].* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

As illustrated in (34), the sentence commences with an if clause and proceeds with two passive constructions that demonstrate the speaker's uncertainty or lack of commitment in the argument. The subsequent sentence once again incorporates an *if*-clause, a frame marker (*want to*), code glosses (*like*), and an engagement marker (*let it*).

(35) *If Iran wants to be treated like a normal country, let it act like a normal country.* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

To Fraser (2010), negative sentences and progressive forms can be categorized as forms of hedges. This is because they imply that a statement is based on the speaker's plausible reasoning rather than absolute certainty. This indicates the level of confidence that should be attributed to it, as in:

(36) *Perhaps you can now understand why Israel is not joining you in celebrating this deal. If Iran's rulers were working to destroy your countries, perhaps you'd be less enthusiastic about the deal. If Iran's terror proxies were firing thousands of rockets at your cities, perhaps you'd be more measured in your praise. And if this deal were unleashing a nuclear arms race in your neighborhood, perhaps you'd be more reluctant to celebrate.* [UN, 2015]

It has been observed that most progressive forms are accompanied by *if*-clauses in which the speaker attempts to avoid making a definitive commitment to a proposition. Numerous markers are present in (36) above, such as hedges (*perhaps*, *is not joining*, *if*-clauses, *were working*, *would*, *about*, *were firing*, *were unleashing*, agentless passive), self-mention (*Israel*), audience pronouns (*you*, *your*), transition markers (*and*), and attitude markers (*enthusiastic*, *reluctant*). These indicate that the speaker has employed MD markers to negotiate interactional meanings in the speeches, express his viewpoints, and engage with the audience as members of a specific community. Contrary to numerous research studies conducted on MD markers (e.g., Chen, 2017; Kashiha, 2022, etc.), boosters (367 instances) were the least frequent interactional type observed in Netanyahu's PSPs. This may potentially indicate a less assured, less decisive, and less authoritative image of the speaker. Additionally, it was observed that boosters were used with relatively higher frequency in four UN speeches (194 instances). This would reflect his authoritative role and position as a president who was expected to impress his audiences by delivering reliable and credible messages, thereby persuading them to acknowledge and support his perspectives, as exemplified in:

(37) *I know that some well-intentioned people sincerely believe that this deal is the best way to block Iran's path to the bomb.* [UN, 2015]

(38) *let me be clear: Israel will not allow the terrorist regime in Iran to develop nuclear weapons – not now, not in a decade, not ever.* [UN, 2016]

In the above examples, boosters (*clear*, *not ever*, and *never*) are employed with engagement markers (*let me*, *allow* and *to develop*), and attitude markers accompanying three-part phrases (*not now*, *not in a decade, not ever*) emphasizing certainty to establish rapport by indicating involvement with the subject matter

and alignment with an audience. It is noteworthy that the speaker frequently used boosters in conjunction with self-referential pronouns (e.g., *I*, *me*, *Israel*) to convey their stance on the discussed topics.

The reason for the frequent use of *I believe* and *I think* in the speeches delivered at the UN and the U.S. Congress is that the majority of the audience members are political experts who share similar values and hold positions of authority. Miššíková (2007) posits that the function of these hedges is metalinguistic as they "pertain to the caliber of language employed by the speaker" (p. 147).

(40) *[…] and that I believed that these many common […] peace in our region.* [UN, 2023]

(41) *I think it's time to talk about the costs of not stopping Iran.* [AIPAC, 2012]

In a notable instance (40), Netanyahu employed the hedge phrase *believe that* preceded by a self-referential statement, to create space for potential disagreement or differing viewpoints among the UN audience. Regarding the hedge *I think* (41) embedded in a self-mention expression, it serves as an engagement tool, eliciting audience responses and enhancing their active participation in the discourse.

4 Conclusion

In general, the research findings indicated that MD is an integral component in constructing persuasion within political discourse and plays a significant role in structuring the discourse of PSPs. The primary objective of interactive types was to demonstrate the speaker's endeavor to guide audiences through the speeches. In contrast, interactional markers directly contributed to the speaker's diverse methods of engaging audiences in their arguments and assessing their level of certainty and commitment towards utterances to persuade audiences. The findings also revealed a preference for interactional types over interactive ones, indicating that engaging audiences in arguments and expressing personal attitudes and evaluations towards propositions were more likely to contribute to the construction of a persuasive PSP. Regarding the subcategories, engagement markers, attitude markers, self-mention and transitions were found to be the most prevalent interactional and interactive markers, respectively.

Our recent findings can offer insights into the broader discourse of PSPs and the specific role of MD in shaping audience persuasion. The results indicate that persuasive strategies are highly contextual and directly address genre-specific characteristics. They specify how a speaker positions themselves within a discourse and conveys their stance and engagement with the audience. These findings can guide the development of persuasive discourse and enhance

novice speakers' understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic conventions of political genres.

In closing, it is worth noting that while there are some limitations that require attention, the results of this study indicate that MD expressions play a crucial role in building and strengthening persuasion, guiding audiences to discern the underlying significance of statements in PSPs. Nevertheless, the analysis did not concentrate on genre-specific and rhetorical aspects of PSPs. This could be an avenue for future research to establish connections between the strategic use of MD devices and specific features (moves or rhetorical structure) of PSPs. Further research may also yield insights into cross-linguistic characteristics of MD usage in PSPs. This could reveal whether cultural differences influence language use and speech delivery styles among native and non-native English-speaking politicians.

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